

VZCZCXRO4039
OO RUEHAG RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDIR RUEHKUK RUEHROV
DE RUEHFR #3956/01 2640945
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 210945Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0328
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 003956

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/20/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [FR](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: KOUCHNER EXPECTED TO MEET IRANIAN COUNTERPART AT
UNGA BUT NOT SARKOZY

REF: A. (A) PARIS POINTS 20 SEPTEMBER 2007

[1](#)B. (B) PARIS 3668

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Andrew Young for reasons 1.4. (b), (d).

[1](#)1. (C) During a September 19 call on French MFA DAS-equivalent for the Levant Ludovic Pouille, we asked whether he had heard anything that might indicate FM Kouchner or any other French officials planned to meet with Iranian President Ahmadi Nejad in New York. Pouille shook his head no on Ahmadi Nejad, but he stated that Kouchner is scheduled to meet with his Iranian counterpart on the margins of the UNGA.

[1](#)2. (C) Although Pouille does not cover Iran, he stated that posts throughout the NEA region had reported queries from host governments about France's policy in light of FM Kouchner's recent remarks about the possibility the confrontation over Iran's nuclear program could lead to war. This had necessitated the drafting of &talking points8 to be sent out worldwide to refocus attention on what Kouchner said about the need to pursue diplomacy to the maximum extent possible. Pouille (strictly protect) opined that Kouchner had not for the first time allowed his tongue to get ahead of his brain in terms of his public utterances. He has struggled since to get the emphasis back on diplomatic efforts to resolve the nuclear issue and to minimize the importance of his reference to the possibility of war.

[1](#)3. (C) We spoke September 20 to French MFA Iran desk officer Arnaud Pescheux, who confirmed his understanding that Kouchner was currently the most senior French official expected to meet with the Iranians in New York, and then only the foreign minister. He related that the Iranian mission in New York had passed a formal written request to the French mission for an Ahmadi Nejad/Sarkozy meeting. The GOF had ignored the request in the same manner it ignored Ahmadi Nejad's congratulatory message to Sarkozy after his election as president. Nonetheless, and as Kouchner has publicly stated, Pescheux underscored that France continues to have a normal relationship with Iran across the board, covering a host of bilateral and regional issues (notably Lebanon). This includes frequent visits to Paris by Iranian officials. Tension over the nuclear issue has not changed this, even though it has obviously complicated the bilateral dialogue somewhat. In this respect, Pescheux stated that the French embassy in Tehran has received numerous complaints about recent public French statements despite the fact that few of them have been replayed fully via the Iranian media to the public at large. (Comment: This echoes what MFA DAS-equivalent for Iran, Iraq, and the Gulf Franck Gellet and others have told us per ref b. End comment)

[1](#)4. (C) With respect to the new channel Velayati has tried to open via Gellet and Presidency strategic affairs adviser

Francois Richier (also ref b), Pescheux said that it was not closed off, just inactive until such time as France might decide to make use of it. He repeated that the GOF is fully aware that Tehran is trying to divide the P-5 1 by opening such a channel. As for the idea, bruited by Pouille, that French special envoy for Lebanon Jean-Claude Cousseran might travel to Tehran with a larger mandate than the situation in Lebanon, Pescheux said that was under discussion. Nothing had been decided, either in terms of dispatching Cousseran on such a mission or possible timing, although it was unlikely to happen prior to the end of the ministerial portion of the current UNGA. Pescheux reiterated the often expressed view at the Quai that, unlike Syria, Iran is not presently inclined to stir things up in Lebanon. He explained that for Iran, the consequences of a renewed civil war that could inter alia pit Sunnis against Shi,a would set Iranian efforts to expand its regional influence back.

15. (C) Comment: As ref a demonstrates, Kouchner is not only trying to recast his earlier remarks in a way that downplays references to the possibility of war with Iran but to underscore his readiness to engage with Iran including via a trip to Tehran. We are not aware of any plans for Kouchner to travel there, however, and he was very careful when he responded to a reporter,s question on this that he kept it limited to whether in principle he was prepared to go. Despite the rhetoric and the furor surrounding Kouchner,s remarks, the French have not closed any doors to continued engagement. We think it unlikely, given the charged atmosphere and the French determination to keep Ahmadi Nejad at arms length, that President Sarkozy will meet formally with him on the margins of UNGA, although we would not rule out the possibility of an impromptu pull-aside should the two find themselves at a group event organized by the UN. Sarkozy was unwavering in a national television interview

PARIS 00003956 002 OF 002

September 21 that Iran must not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

Pekala